

THE
LEADSTACKER
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SOME OPINIONS

The new Crusaders are attempting to stir things up. They're rabble rousers. Why would they want to change things? What's wrong with the way the American Amateur Press Association is operating now? Don't we have plenty of money in the treasury? Don't we have about 350 people on the membership role? Aren't our bundles fatter than any other ajay or hobby printing group? So why are these people wanting to mess around with the constitution and by-laws? If it ain't broke, don't fix it! Right? Well—maybe. Since this is *my* journal I'm going to offer a few of my humble opinions about what's wrong with the AAPA and what *I* think should be done to correct these problems.

The AAPA is not broken, it doesn't need fixing. It is, however, rusty, dirty, cobweb covered, and in need of some maintenance. It needs a little cleaning and polishing to make it shine. It's been neglected for too long and if we are to keep it running, we must do some preventative maintenance, a tuneup if you will. Since it's been humming along pretty well for quite a while now, we have not noticed the little dings, the rust, the small scratches, and fading paint.

There is some talk of changing or rewriting the constitution and by-laws of the AAPA. A total rewriting seems to me to be a very extreme course of action. A simple amendment here or there

should be enough to update our constitution and by-laws to current conditions. The basic document seems workable and I can see no reason for a major revision. I will agree that there is a case for changing the terms of officers from one year to two years and consequently, the limit on number of terms from three to two. Most officers currently and almost automatically serve three years. It makes good sense to hold elections every two years thus saving the association some expense and getting four years of service from those willing to accept an office.

As for streamlining the offices or combining some positions, it seems to me that we need more active officers rather than putting a heavier work load on one person. We need a Manuscript Manager who will get out there and beat the bushes for manuscripts. The Manuscript Manager needs to harass, annoy, and hassle nonparticipating members into submitting manuscripts. The First Vice President should be more particular about who is recruited. New recruits should show that they will actually write, publish or print. The Secretary-Treasurer should require a significant credential before accepting a new member.

The real problem with the American Amateur Press Association is nonparticipating members. Think of this — three hundred members each publishing only a four page flimsy journal, every other month. That's 150 flimsies in each bundle! That's six hundred pages of writing to be read

each month when your bundle arrived. It would take a couple of days to read the bundle rather than the thirty minutes or less it now takes. We would *have* to increase the dues to pay the postage. The Mailer would probably have to hire help. The Historian would work for hours recording activity. The *American Amateur Journalist* would have to be expanded by four pages just for the Historian's report. The Laureate Judges would be pulling their hair out.

I suggest that a recruiting effort is not appropriate at this time but a major effort should be made to get inactive members either publishing, writing, printing or serving in an official capacity or off the membership roll. It's beginning to irritate me to print this journal for so many deadbeats. Don't get me wrong, I'm not asking each and every member to publish something as large as this journal or have something in the bundle every month, but I think they should, at the very least, publish fifteen hundred words every year. I know someone will write and tell me they have a full-time job, kids to raise, a house and spouse to care for, or on and on with some excuse. I really don't want to hear that stuff; I've got plenty to do too but I still manage to get something in the bundle occasionally. There are about a hundred and fifty other members who seem to be able to contribute even though they lead very active lives. Do you inactive members really think that people who take an active role in the association have

nothing else to do but publish journals or serve in an office? Do you seriously believe you're doing me and other publishers a favor by simply reading journals? That's hogwash! We want some reaction, we want some reciprocation. You read my journal, I'll read yours. Can't do that if you don't write or publish. Either you will find the time to participate in this hobby or you won't; and in my opinion, if you won't take an active role, you have no place in amateur journalism.

Here's some ideas I have to make nonparticipating members take an active role. Give one of the Board of Directors a new title, say, "Lord High Executioner." Article 8 of our current By-Laws states, "The Board of Directors shall act as the governing and judicial body of the organization. It shall . . . (v) expel or suspend any member for acts detrimental to the best interests of the organization . . ." I think I could find a consensus of members that agree with me that non-participation is "detrimental" to the AAPA. Give the "Lord High Executioner" a set of guidelines, something like, "If a member fails to write, publish, or print fifteen hundred words per year or will not serve as an officer in the association, that member will be excommunicated." Off with their heads!

Perhaps we could establish two classes of membership, Contributing Members and Readers. Reading members would have a dues rate of \$50 per year and Contributing Members (those who

serve in office or publish) would pay no dues. At our *approximate* current participation level (100 participating, 200 nonparticipating) the dues of the Readers would contribute \$10,000 to the treasury. Then take half of the yearly dues and split it among participating members giving them even more of an incentive to publish and helping defray their costs.

The new Crusaders can write mission statements, revise the Constitution, produce fancy recruiting brochures, even recruit a thousand new members and it won't do a bit of good for the association if no one participates. Give me one hundred active members, not more deadbeats!

SAVING LETTERPRESS

There are some people in the American Amateur Press Association who think that one of the functions of that association should be to preserve letterpress printing. The AAPA is a *journalism* association not a *printing* association. If letterpress printing should be saved by some association, that organization should be the Amalgamated Printers Association. The APA purports to be for letterpress printers only, therefore it's logical, to me at least, that organization should take on the job of preserving, educating people about, publicizing and printing with, the letterpress process.

AAPA's emphasis should be the written word; APA's focus is a particular process of reproducing that written word. The Amalgamated Printers should take a more active role in seeing that any existing equipment that becomes available should find a proper home either with a particular individual or with a museum. The APA might even consider as a goal, establishing, equipping, *and staffing* a letterpress printing museum, particularly in a major city near the center of the country; somewhere like Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis, Kansas City, Cincinnati, or Indianapolis. In a museum-type facility, artifacts could be preserved, rebuilt, demonstrated, operated, and the letterpress process be taught to those interested in learning the process. It might even be an excellent joint project between the APA and the American Typecasting Fellowship and include a section for typecasting preservation.

Someone has said that "letterpress is dead." I don't believe it's dead yet but it certainly has serious health problems that require major surgery. There seems to be plenty of equipment available to those who would like to preserve it. It's obvious to me that the reason letterpress printing is dying is a lack of qualified, trained, enthusiastic practitioners of the art. Look at the letterpress printers around us. With only a few exceptions, most are senior citizens, many are self-taught (and some not too well), are dying off at an alarming rate, or just don't have the energy to bring new

and younger people into the craft. I know of only one person who is actively and sincerely trying to teach other people this craft. If letterpress printing is going to survive, more than one person is going to have to spread the knowledge of the craft. Ironic isn't it? Four hundred years ago the secrets of printing were closely guarded but today we can't find anyone who wants or cares to know these secrets.

Do I hear any further discussion on this idea?

TYPOGRAPHY FOR AMATEURS

As a student of typography I read almost every book available on the subject. I have a long shelf full of books on typography, book design, and type design in my personal library. Almost every day I will read something about typography, or observe some small detail by a more skilled typographer, or learn a little something about my own attempts at typographic design and ways to improve my work. I do not consider myself an expert typographer or fancy myself to be a book designer. I consider myself to be a practical printer—a fellow who does a bit of printing and has learned and is still learning ways to improve his typography.

I feel there is a need to assist other hobby

printers and amateur journalist in making their journals and other printed items more readable and pleasing to the eye. I'm not entirely sure that I'm the right person for this task, but since I'm the only volunteer, I'll take a stab at it. I think that I might possibly be able to point out some problems and offer some solutions to those hobbyists and amateurs who desire to improve the readability of their work. I will make an attempt at explaining what I think is good typography for amateur publishers and what I have observed, mostly by making horrific errors myself.

I would like to approach this subject of amateur typography from the viewpoint of someone wanting to design a simple journal of four or eight pages. I would like to examine typography not from the standpoint of a book designer but on an amateur plane—typography for those who have more interest in writing and publishing than printing, but who want to make their publications more appealing visually. I would like to show that an amateur publisher can produce attractive work no matter what means of graphic reproduction are used, whether it be letterpress, computer generated, photocopied or even type-written.

There are several features critical to making a typographically superior amateur journal and they are all interrelated. As we examine each feature, remember that each item discussed has some bearing on the appropriateness of another

feature. For example, type size is primarily determined by page size and page size is determined by paper size.

TYPE STYLES FOR TEXT MATTER

Selection of a type style for the text or body composition is probably the first thing that should be decided when planning an amateur journal or any other piece of printed matter. For text matter nothing surpasses a classic roman face for readability and simplicity. Our eyes are most accustomed to reading this letter style and if your intent is to get other people to read what you publish, then your choices are limited to faces like Caslon, Bembo, Baskerville, Century, Times Roman or other such classic faces. Avoid roman faces with eccentricities or delicate serifs and strokes. Roman faces with odd characters will detract the readers' eye and cause the reader to lose concentration on the subject matter. It's been said by so many people, in so many ways, "Type is meant to be read." Delicate types will also tend to wear quickly if printed letterpress or degenerate using photographic methods of reproduction.

Economics figures into the selection of a typeface if one is printing letterpress. Book designers, commercial printing offices, and many fine printers can afford or justify buying any typeface needed or specified by a customer, but hobby printers normally can't afford to buy another type just because he or she has the desire to do so.

Many hobby printers have to make do with what faces are already available in their own shop or find a font that is bargain. If one is given or has on hand full cases of Italian Old Style, Kennerly, or even Cheltenham Old Style, then by all means use it, but learn to use it well.

For computer users these days the choice of a text type is less an economic one than for letter-press printers, since type fonts are literally a dime a dozen. Don't be tempted by all those fonts available for only pennies; pick a classic roman face and stick with it.

Typewriter users are pretty much stuck with what's on the machine but that in itself is not a seriously difficult letter style to read since so many of us are accustomed to reading that style. Sometimes typewriter type can be improved by reducing it *slightly*, no more than 10%. A common sight in amateur bundles are journals typed on 8½ x 11, taped together with another sheet, and reduced by 50% to fit back on an 8½ x 11, and then folded to make two pages. The problem here is that the original pica type is now six point!

DISPLAY TYPE FACE SELECTION

Display faces are those that an amateur might use for a masthead on a journal or a headline in the body of that journal.

For the letterpress printer, there are many display faces available and choosing one or two seems to be an easy task but if examined closely there are many pitfalls. There are many letter-

press printers in the hobby and amateur ranks who collect old type faces and I'm one of those. Using antique type faces is fun but usually they do not make for an attractive journal. If one is writing about printing history or antique printing, these styles might be appropriate but overall it would be good to avoid them if you plan to make your journal easy to read and tasteful.

Likewise, it would be wise to avoid most of the display styles created in the twentieth century as these were designed primarily for advertising purposes. An amateur journal is not a piece of advertising so avoid those types, particularly script faces, made to shout at newspaper and magazine readers. Something frequently seen in the bundles is the use of type faces created for invitations and social printing used for headlines and mastheads. While these type styles are often readily available (and frequently at a low cost) to the hobby printer, they are difficult to read and inappropriate.

For the computer users not only are many antique type faces available, but many, perhaps thousands, of new display faces are available with new faces being created daily. Like the type designers of the Victorian era, the computer type-face designers of this era are making every effort to design something new, different, and clever. Unlike the Victorian type designers whose creations were for the most part, "beautifully ugly," most of those type designs being done for and on computers are freakish and unreadable.

HOW I GOT THIS WAY

Confessions Of A Collecting Fool

Sometime back in the 1980's, I had the good fortune to quit working for a living and live off the fat of the land. At that time I owned a ten by fifteen Chandler and Price old style press and a couple of cabinets of Stymie and Franklin Gothic types. Letterpress equipment was scarce in Arkansas and I was unaware of hobby and amateur printing and printers. I've been a printer since I was in high school back in about '64. Although I did mostly commercial printing and much of that photo-offset, I've had an affinity for letterpress since I first picked up a composing stick in high school. Even though offset printing was the way I earned my living, I always managed to slip back in the letterpress sections of the many small shops where I worked to "help out" a bit. Being trained in both letterpress and offset helped me land more than one job.

In three years of high school and three years of college courses in printing, I never heard one mention of "fine printing" or "hobby printing" or "hobby printers." In the trade journals I poured over, I saw no articles about good typography and only scant mention of the glorious history of the printing craft.

Printing has never been "just a job" for me. I've always loved what I did. I've always been proud of my abilities as a printer. Even through the

pressures of deadlines, asinine customers, shoddy equipment and materials, and shortsighted employers, I retained my passion for my craft.

I bought that first press and bit of type in order that I could print stationery and note paper for my family and friends. Some of the small job shops where I worked allowed me to print this sort of thing on company equipment but on my own time. This generosity notwithstanding, I felt it would be more appropriate not to impose on my employers.

Then my quest began to find more type—something better looking than Stymie and Franklin Gothic. I was unaware of existing type foundries. I also needed supplies like rollers, paper and guage pins. Letterpress supplies were also hard to find locally.

As we began to travel a bit, I would inquire in different cities about letterpress equipment. Sitting in a motel room in some different city, I would check the used printing equipment dealers listing in the phone book. I would make the calls and check out the leads but with little results.

Then one day, Robyn and I found ourselves in Chicago with an overnight layover. Sitting in the hotel room I picked up the phone and the phone directory and started making my calls to equipment dealers. As usual, I found very little letterpress equipment at the dealers but I did get a couple of suggestions like, “The fellow you need to talk to is Jack Frank,” or “Oh, you should call

Jack Frank!" So, by golly, I called Jack Frank. I got Jack himself on the phone, asked if he had any letterpress equipment—long pause on Jack's side of the line. Then he replied something like, "Yeah, just a little."

Next morning we grabbed a cab to Jack's. I don't have to describe Jack's to many of my readers who are interested in printing. Those of my readers who are not interested in printing will probably be relieved to hear me describe Jack's as simply indescribable. Jack has a *lot* of printing stuff. I was overwhelmed after walking around a bit in Jack's. Obviously, since we were flying, I couldn't take anything back with me but I decided I would just have to come back—with an empty truck!

During my short conversation with Jack, I was surprised to learn that there were other hobby printers, other people printing in their basements and garages, with antiquated equipment. Jack even mentioned that there were organizations of these people. Jack told me about a fellow in Indianapolis that I should get in touch with—a fellow named Dave Churchman. Jack even gave me Dave's phone number.

As soon as we got home I gave Dave a call and he filled me in with some details about what was going on in the hobby printing world. A few days later a huge packet arrived from Dave with about an eleven page letter telling me more about amateur journalism.

After digesting Dave's letter I had even more questions, so I fired off a letter and with haste and dispatch, Dave replied. This letter exchange must have gone on for several months. It wasn't long before I made the pilgrimage to Indianapolis and visited Dave's emporium on Warman Street. We left Indianapolis with our motor home listing to one side because of a whole bunch of lead on board.

Sometime in 1984, August I think it was, I joined the AAPA and started publishing the *Lead-stacker* in November of that same year. By 1986 I managed to weasel into the APA.

Dave's patience with this neophyte collector was much more than commendable. As I look back on it, Dave Churchman's efforts for me seem almost heroic. It was Dave who sent me long letters and hundreds of photocopies, almost never asking to be reimbursed for the postage or the copies even though now I consider it a common courtesy to reimburse or be reimbursed for copies or postage from those with whom I'm not a regular correspondent. It was Dave who allowed me the privilege of splitting Ron Ruble's collection. It was Dave who made all the arrangements for me concerning James Eckman's collection. And it was even Dave who told me about the availability of the Speckter collection.

As you can see it's been Dave Churchman who has been so instrumental in helping me establish my collection of type and presses but there's

been many other people who have aided and abetted. There are just too many friends and acquaintances to mention, who have helped by selling, or in some cases giving, me a press or two or a couple of fonts of type. When I use a particular press or open a case of type, I frequently remember who I got it from and I think of that person and silently thank them. When I stand in my shop and look around, it's not *my* collection that I see, it's *our* collection. I see a collection of printing artifacts saved by many caring individuals and luckily deposited where I can use or admire these artifacts. I thank you one and all but especially my friend Dave.

It is not my wish to hide this collection either; if you're ever going to be down in this neck of the woods, give me a little advance notice and I'll try to be here to open the shop and give you the tour.

THE URGE TO MERGE

I hear more sinister rumors rumbling through the bundles. What is this dangerous talk I hear of merging the American Amateur Press Association with other amateur journalistic organizations? Surely these people jest when they suggest that the AAPA and brand-X association should become one organization. Regardless that it's against the

constitution of the AAPA to merge with any other ajay organization, the mere thought of the AAPA joining forces with another ajay group is ludicrous. Why would anybody even think of the idea? Is the fear of the demise of amateur journalism so great that we would risk losing the identity of the AAPA?

I just can't imagine the laid-back members of the AAPA coalescing with another organization like the brand-X association, known for its constitutional nit-picking and its overburden of rules and regulations. The thought of the easy-going AAPAers integrating their Chinese dinnering, socializing, multi-media, hospitality suite packing, no official business, conventions with another ajay group that spends three entire convention days in heated debate over the placement of two commas and a period in the constitution is just too farcical for my mind to comprehend.

Try as I may, I can't understand how one group that allows almost anything into its bundles from real ajay journals to jelly labels and slogan cards, could possibly combine its bundle with an organization that won't allow anything in its bundle that doesn't have an issue number and date or whose official organ costs them a premium just because the group is so inflexible that it can't conform to the modern standard paper sizes.

I'm a member of both groups and here's the way I see it. On one hand you have a group, once a "splinter group," of easy-going, adaptable

people who care more about writing, printing, publishing, and enjoying the hobby of amateur journalism. On the other hand you have a group of people who have forgotten the original purpose of amateur journalism and have somehow managed to turn this into a hobby of politics, debating, and contention. The AAPA and the National Amateur Press Association are two distinctly different groups of people with opposing ideas of what exactly is amateur journalism.

How could the members of the AAPA even consider merging with a group that scoffed at the "boy printers." Go back and read Leland Hawes' outstanding history of the AAPA in the *American Amateur Journalist* (Volume 50, Number 2, January, 1986 to Volume 50, Number 6, September, 1986) for a better understanding of the struggles of the AAPA. Mergers and joint operations between ajay groups have been attempted before and have not even come close to working out the *initial* problems. I predict that even if all the elementary problems might be negotiated, the long-range problems that would ensue would eventually mean the death of the hobby, the demise of both organizations.

In conclusion, I would also remind those few members of the American Amateur Press Association who are active, who actually publish, that in the event the AAPA and the NAPA should actually merge, that you would have *yet another* couple of hundred deadbeats for whom you

would have to print or publish your journal! I for one will not increase my press runs, my production, for more inactive members. I will fight any attempt of merger of the AAPA with another ajay organization with any means available to me. Will anyone else join me in a fight against merger? Does anybody else believe as I do that the salvation of the American Amateur Press Association is *not* a marriage of convenience with the NAPA but a *fight*, even to the death, to recruit new, energetic members?

N O M E R G E R!

A LITTLE SHOP

Ernest Hesse

Let but a little shop be mine—

A little shop where I can hear
One motor hum and see the shine
Of brand-new types and watch my sign
Swing in the atmosphere.

Let but a little shop be mine—

A shop with inks as black as jet,
Inks yellow as the moonbeam's shine,
Inks greener than a creeping vine,
Inks whiter than Jeanette.

Let but a little shop be mine—

The firelight dancing o'er the floor;
My types, my press, my creaking sign,
A little booklet to design,
And I'll not ask for more.

COLOPHON

J. Ed was right—with this new technology one rambles on and on without being economical with words. No thought was given to condensing, editing, refining, or simplifying the gaseous opinions of the author in order to make the the job of hand-setting easier. No meat-axe was used on the copy. With this new technology, this misanthropic writer can vent his grievances to his black hearts' content. Type for this issue was almost instantaneously composed on a forty year old Linotype and impressed on a one hundred year old platen press driven by a high-speed electric motor. The finished pages were then folded, on a electric folding machine then quickly collated, stapled and trimmed in only a couple of days' time. This new technology sure beats calligraphy.

As is my custom, I've hidden some typographical errors, eight this time, throughout this little publication, for the pleasure of those of my readers who take such delight in detecting these things.

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